Cuts Feared By Sprague's Chairman

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Washington — Rep. Henry B. Gonzalez (D-Texas), the man expected to be chairman of the House Select Committee on Assassinations, said yesterday the committee will not use lie-detection devices on witnesses without their consent.

Gonzalez also has refused to back off on the committee's proposed $6.5 million budget for 1977. He said he feels it probably will be substantially reduced, but he'll take what he can get.

"If you can't have a whole loaf, then you have half a loaf," Gonzalez said.

The budget proposal — put together by Committee Counsel Richard A. Sprague, former Philadelphia first assistant district attorney — has run into opposition among House leaders in the new Congress.

Republican Leader John J. Rhodes (Ariz) said he expects that figure to be cut and Speaker Thomas P. (Tip) O'Neil (D-Mass) indicated at his first press briefing that its approval is doubtful.

Democratic Leader Jim Wright (Tex) told the House he was concerned about the high cost estimate. And the committee's ranking Republican, Samuel Devine (Ohio), said he expects half a loaf is just about what the House may approve.

Also, a proposal by Sprauge to use psychological-stress evaluators on witnesses without their knowledge has been criticized by Rep. Don Edwards (D-Calif), a former FBI man, as "wrong, immoral and very likely illegal."

The evaluator is a device for measuring the truthfulness of a person's statements through stress patterns in the voice.

Sprague has said he wants the stress evaluator as an "investigative tool" in probing the killings of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr.

The device also can be used by tape recording interviews and playing them back later for the evaluator.

Asked if committee witnesses would be taped or subjected to stress-evaluator tests without their consent, Gonzalez said:

"I wouldn't abide it. It would be wrongful to do that."

Gonzalez said he personally is concerned about guarding the constitutional rights of persons who are interviewed by the committee and he believes Sprague also is "sensitive about the constitutional factors."

A committee spokesman said the results of stress tests would not be made public or used "to call somebody a liar."

Gonzalez expressed concern that the assassinations committee — created last September — is getting off on the wrong foot with the new Congress.

"We are not a super CIA," Gonzalez said. "We are not a special prosecutor's office. We are not a grand jury — it would be obnoxious in the extreme if we assumed that role."

Gonzalez said the committee will attempt to do a methodical job in reviewing the Kennedy and King killings in hopes of bringing all the facts to light.

The committee operated for the first

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three months of its life last year on a $150,000 start-up appropriation.

Sprague — with the blessing of retired Committee Chairman Thomas N. Downing (D-Va) — is asking for a "bare bones" budget of $6.5 million to hire 170 staff workers this year.

Rather than push for the $6.5 million, Gonzalez said he would seek House approval next week of a temporary appropriation of approximately $80,000 a month. This would keep the committee operating, he said, while a full-year budget is put together.

Gonzalez said he expects the committee budget for 1977 to fall substantially short of $6.5 million.

"We can't ask for the whole load the first day when we've got to eat all year," Gonzalez said. "I think (the committee work) has to be done gradually, carefully, slowly and surely."